

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CALIFORNIA COUNCIL OF GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS 1946-1964

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With the retirement last year of Calvon McKim, who played a leading role in the establishment of the California Council of Geography Teachers, and the not-too-distant retirement of others who were active in the early days of the organization, it seems opportune to record the details of the founding and the early years of the organization while the facts can still be recalled. Furthermore, the council having functioned for eighteen years, a summary of activities is in order, both for the sake of recording the facts and providing a basis for review which could be useful to charting the future course of the organization.

The initial move in the establishment of the California Council was a letter from Calvon McKim, chairman of the Geography-Geology Department at Fresno State College, to Clifford Zierer, chairman of the Geography Department at U.C.L.A., suggested the possibility of establishing a state council and proposing a meeting in Los Angeles to which interested parties might be invited. Clifford Zierer replied favorably and designated Henry J. Bruman to make arrangements for the meeting. Letters were sent to various schools, calling attention to the meeting scheduled for Saturday, December 7th, 1946, in Royce Hall at U.C.L.A. A general discussion of the functions of geography in education in the California schools was planned for a morning session. Luncheon for the group was arranged at a tearoom in Westwood Village. Following the luncheon an organizational meeting was held at which the California Council of Geography Teachers became a reality.

There were many factors which favored the creation of a California State Council at this time. The National Council was anxious to have active councils in all states and urged McKim to take the initiative in establishing one in California. With the ending of the war there was a mass return of G.I.'s to the universities and colleges. Geography had attained an important status during the war, and its adherents were eager to preserve and extend the position of the subject in the school program. Only through organization could a subject hope to maintain its status in a competitive curriculum. Although an existing organization, the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers, served to bring together geographers from the western section of the country, it was felt by many that its aims were directed primarily at the college level and were designed to emphasize research rather than concern with the problems of geography in education at all school levels.

At the organizational meeting Calvon McKim was elected president and Walter Willey of the El Rodeo School in Beverly Hills was elected secretary-treasurer, a post which he capably held for a number of years. The adopted constitution provided for an annual meeting to be held in conjunction with the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers meetings when they were held in California, as was the case in 1947 when the meetings were held in San Diego.

The first annual meeting of the Council was held on Saturday, June 21, 1947, in the San Diego Hotel. Homer Aschmann took charge of local arrangements. Reports were submitted by the president on the membership drive and by the secretary on public relations. Lauren Post discussed the topic, "A Geography Field Trip in San Diego County," illustrated with slides. The next meeting was set for Berkeley the following June.

A more extensive program of papers was presented at the second annual meeting held at the University of California at Berkeley. Local arrangements were made by John Kesseli with Walter Hacker, president, serving as chairman. An afternoon field trip over the hills of San Francisco proved to be an elimination contest with, so 'tis said, only the leader's car completing the tour.

By the third meeting the organization attracted a fine turnout at Ventura Junior College with Rex Brittingham responsible for local arrangements. As the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers was meeting in another state, the first weekend in May was selected as a more suitable time than June for the annual meeting. Featured at the meeting was a display of maps and textbooks by publishers, a practice which has been continued, especially by the map publishers, through the years. Langdon White, who from the very beginning gave enthusiastic support to the organization, was the principal speaker at the noon luncheon. Arthur Carthew served as president and chairman.

After the success of the Ventura meeting the constitution was amended to the effect that meetings were no longer to be held in conjunction with the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers. A policy of shifting the meetings between the northern and southern sections of the state was adopted, and the fourth meeting held at Stanford University with Alfred Sumner in charge of local arrangements. Robert Pease served as president and chairman and George McBride gave the dinner address. A distinctive feature of the meeting was an aerial field trip covering the Bay region.

Returning to the southern section, U.C.L.A. hosted the organization for the fifth annual meeting with Benjamin Thomas, president, in charge of local arrangements. Ruth Baugh presented the luncheon paper. Following the success of the air trip the previous year, David Jennings organized an aerial excursion which covered a segment of the San Andreas Fault as well as the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

Under the presidency of Chester Cole, the sixth annual meeting was held at Fresno State College. The central location in the state brought an exceptionally large turnout and featured Carl Sauer as the luncheon speaker. A field trip to the Russell Giffen Ranch on the west side of the Valley proved a great success under the leadership of Chet Cole.

Returning to San Diego State College, the seventh meeting was conducted by President David Lantis with Robert Richardson in charge of local arrangements. A highlight of the affair was a field trip led by Lauren Post through the fascinating San Diego hinterland to the mountain community of Julian.

Moving to the farthest north location ever selected by the organization, Chico State College served as the host institution for the eighth annual

meeting. Alfred Butz served as president with Bruce Ogilvie in charge of local arrangements. Samuel Van Valkenburg gave the banquet address. The meeting was climaxed by a field trip through the Sutter Buttes led by Fred Neumann and Tom Rodgers.

The only non-college level institution to host the organization, Santa Monica High School, was chosen for the ninth meeting. Bruce Ogilvie served as president with John Ives in charge of local arrangements and with George McBride presenting the banquet address. An aerial field trip, this time devoted to the urban areas of Orange and Los Angeles counties, was again a feature of the meeting.

Shifting north, Sacramento Junior College hosted the council at the tenth annual meeting with Clarissa Kimber in charge of local arrangements. David Jennings presided over the well-attended meetings. The most comprehensive program of field trips offered at any of the meetings was scheduled, with emphasis on flood problems in the Sacramento area.

Under the presidency of Adolf Stone, with David Lantis in charge of local arrangements, the eleventh meeting was held at Compton College. David Jennings gave the banquet address under the intriguing title of "Adventures in Serendipity."

Santa Rosa Junior College served as the host institution for the twelfth meeting. Robert Johnson presided with Alfred Butz in charge of local arrangements. The Pacific Northwest was drawn on for luncheon and banquet speakers with Granville Jensen of Oregon State and Douglas Jackson of the University of Washington performing the honors. The field trip at this meeting was a tour through the apple country to the coast.

Attracting an exceptionally large attendance, the thirteenth meeting was held at Long Beach City College with Adolph Stone in charge of local arrangements. Robert Eidt presided over the meetings, which featured Walter Willey as luncheon speaker. C. Langdon White presented the banquet address. A field trip through Long Beach harbor on the boat "Shearwater" proved a special delight.

The fourteenth meeting was held at San Jose State College with Walter Olson presiding and William Steele in charge of local arrangements. Huey Kostanick presented the banquet address.

Anxious to show off its new, large, beautiful campus, San Fernando Valley State College invited the council for the fifteenth annual meeting. Robert Durrenberger took charge of local arrangements. Howard Nelson presided, with Joseph Spencer serving as banquet speaker. A unique field trip and social affair featured a visit to the Anheuser-Busch Brewery.

Returning to Fresno State College, the sixteenth meeting was presided over by John Crosby with Chester Cole and Roger Ervin responsible for local arrangements. A Friday night social affair featured a dinner with a wine-tasting prelude. Ned Munger presented the banquet address.

San Diego State College hosted the seventeenth meeting, the third time in the organization's history that San Diego had served in this capacity. A social affair on a tropical island provided a delightful interlude. Lauren

Post presided over the meetings and a most cooperative staff shared in providing the local arrangements. Hugo Fisher, head of the State Resources Agency, gave the banquet address. A particularly successful feature of the meeting was a panel on high school geography, organized by William Pattison.

The eighteenth annual meeting was held at the University of the Pacific at Stockton with James Blick in charge of local arrangements. Ray Stanley presided over the well-attended meetings. Arthur Carthew gave the luncheon address and Richard Logan addressed the evening banquet.

Following the meetings Long Beach State College invited the Council to meet in Long Beach in 1965, under the leadership of President Sheldon D. Ericksen.

In addition to the annual meetings featuring the presentation of papers, committee reports, business sessions, field trips, social affairs, luncheon and banquet speeches, the organization embarked on a limited program of publications. The first publication was the *Newsletter*, first edited by Lauren Post, followed by David Lantis and Chester Cole. It was issued several times a year in mimeographed form, with such items of news as a president's message, annual meeting programs, and department information. Once a year a membership list was included in some of the early numbers, and a few research studies were printed such as Valene Smith's "Report on the Legal Status of Geography Instruction in California." Reference to this article were later to prove useful to some schools seeking to expand their geography offerings.

November, 1953, saw the inauguration of the *Bulletin of the California Council of Geography Teachers* under the editorship of Chester Cole. This was a somewhat larger and more inclusive publication than the *Newsletter* and included room for a few manuscripts, generally drawn from papers presented at the annual meetings. After six years of devoted work by Cole, Robert A. Kennelly took the editorship in 1959 to, in turn, pass on the assignment in 1960 to Robert Lamb who continued until 1964, when Stanley Ross took over.

Starting in 1960 a printed yearbook publication, the *California Geographer*, was inaugurated under the editorship of Robert A. Kennelly. The majority of the articles are drawn from papers presented at the annual meetings. The Los Angeles Trade-Technical College Printing Department is responsible for the printing of the publication for which the Council is most grateful.

Committee work has made important contributions to the activities of the council. Perhaps the most important single contribution was made by the Committee on Teacher Certification under the able leadership of Lauren Post. Following passage of the Fisher Bill by the state legislature in 1961, which provided for a new teacher certification program in California, the council took steps through the appointed committee to see that geography would be adequately represented in the program. Meetings were held with the responsible officials in the State Department of Education, and geographers throughout the state were asked to submit suggestions for a desirable program. The final program was conveyed to the proper authori-

ties and has probably made a positive contribution to assuring geography a firm position in the new credentialing program, although at this writing implementation of the final program has not been completed. Certainly without a spokesman in its behalf, geography could have been relegated to a very minor role in the teacher certification program which would in turn affect its status in the entire education program of the state.

Through the years there has not always been unanimous agreement regarding the work and function of the council. In 1960 quite a move developed to change the name of the organization and to place more emphasis on basic geographic research and less on geography in education. In a spirited election, the membership went on record as emphasizing the educational aspect of geography in the council program and retaining the name of California Council of Geography Teachers.

In reviewing the history of the organization, it is only proper to point out some failures and shortcomings as well as successes. Failure to recruit a larger membership from the ranks of elementary and high school teachers has been regrettable. Most of the membership has consisted of college and university personnel. Perhaps young geographers, particularly graduate students, have not been sufficiently well indoctrinated in the need for organization, nor have they been encouraged to join. The annual meetings have, on occasion, been characterized by quite inferior programs, made up of volunteer papers with perhaps no central theme organization. Not enough emphasis has been given to improving geographic instruction at the various levels, including the college and university. Some of the "big names" have not given the active support to the organization that professional responsibility should expect, although several such individuals who expressed skepticism regarding the council at its organization have come around to lending active support to the program.

On the positive side, geography in California has an organization, which every subject in the highly competitive educational curriculum needs in order to hold its own. No subject can expect individuals not trained in its discipline to fight its curricular battles. The annual meetings have yielded rewards not measurable in papers and reports, by providing personal contacts, opportunity to exchange ideas, constructive gossip, and, perhaps most important, have helped create a geographic fraternity with a group of educators committed to an ideal and joined in a feeling that they have something important to contribute to the education of the students of our state.

Perhaps some additional suggestions might be in order for the future, in addition to improving the established program. Interim meetings, in addition to the annual meeting, might be scheduled on a regional basis. Such meetings could be of a seminar nature with discussion panels on which local teachers are drawn on for ideas and demonstrations. Perhaps the council could exert influence on schools and communities with inferior geography programs, by communications and suggestions to improve or add geography instruction. In-service programs should be proposed to local school systems with competent people available to staff them. There are still colleges in California training teachers which do not offer a single course in geography! The meeting programs should be better planned, with

qualified individuals asked to share in at least part of the program, possibly in a panel type of presentation. A topic of genuine interest and importance should be developed. Possibly certain non-geographers should be invited to give points of view which could contribute to better understanding. The excellent field trip programs have greatly enriched the knowledge of our state on the part of those participating, and, if the setting of the meeting justifies it, field trips should be scheduled and carefully organized. The fine social affairs which have characterized many of the annual meetings should be continued and the Denoyer-Geppert Company deserves congratulations for its fine contribution to the success of past affairs. The many young geographers should be encouraged by their member institutions to join and take an active role in the council.

In addition to those whose names have been mentioned serving as president, arrangements chairmen, speakers and editors, credit should be given to others, especially the treasurers who commonly held office for two or more successive years. William Byron, Howard Brunson, and Delmas Bugelli helped keep the organization solvent through the years. Undoubtedly many others whose names cannot be recalled at this writing have also made their contribution, serving on committees and assisting with the annual programs. Only the limitation of space and memory makes it impossible to do justice to all who have shared in the function of the organization throughout its life.

With a record reaching over eighteen years and with a bright future ahead, the California Council of Geography Teachers deserves the continued support of the profession.